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Chief Customer Experience & Organisational Excellence Officer, SSTL

From sneakers to lipsticks to telecom" is how Vlad Pozdyshev sums up his career graph. Born and bred in St Petersburg, Russia, he graduated from a state university and started his career with the Danish Consulate General in 1992, "in the early days of new Russia", he elaborates.

Within a year, he changed tracks and shifted to the fast moving consumer goods industry. His first assignment in this space was with Reebok Russia, where he was responsible for establishing the footwear major's presence in St Petersburg. Then, in 1997, he shifted to cosmetic major Mary Kay.

"Switching sneakers for lipsticks was quite a tough decision, though the choice was balanced out by the business model that provided one with the flexibility of expansion and direct access to customers," he says.

The stint with Mary Kay involved a fair bit of travel and Pozdyshev had to move base twice, first to Kiev and then to London. While in Kiev, he was head of the company's Ukraine operations and in London, he was head of its Western European operations.



His telecom innings began in 2005, when he joined MTS as director of projects. He quickly climbed up the ladder to become head of customer care in Russia. "There were many happy days of work, achievements and celebrations that made customer care an important component of the overall success of MTS Russia," he says.

He came to India in November 2008 and started a new chapter in his life as chief customer experience and organisational excellence officer at Sistema Shyam TeleServices Limited (SSTL), MTS's Indian arm. The country's telecom sector presented huge challenges with stiff competition from the incumbent operators, but plenty of potential too. "India is a huge country with a diverse cultural and economic mix. Given this diversity, it is challenging as well as rewarding to understand the dynamics of working here. Doing things the SSTL way, we have found a place in the minds of consumers," he says.

Travelling around the world and experiencing new cultures has always interested Pozdyshev. "My childhood in the erstwhile Soviet Union made me want to travel abroad to see new countries and experience new ways of living." He has travelled extensively with his family, including to New Zealand and Australia.

Right now, he's focusing on discovering India while pursuing his latest hobby, riding a motorbike. "I am expecting my new bike to arrive anyday. It would be cool to go for a long trip on the bike once it's here." ▲

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“exhilarating” performances from national rock heroes Demonic Resurrection and Split, who played to an audience of over 6,000.

Closer home, the event at Tantra saw Calcutta bands Skinny Alley, Hip Pocket, Cassini’s Division and Krosswindz belt out their best. One of the highlights was Cassini’s Division’s eclectic set, whose sound went from REM vocals to Ska riffs to East African beats over the space of 45 minutes. Another standout moment was Hip Pocket’s cover of The Who’s *Baba O’Riley*, which included a near-transcendent solo from lead guitarist Sumith Ramachandran. Finishing off the evening were troubadours Skinny Alley, who mixed ethereal synths, sultry vocals and sturdy drums with old-school rock in a powerful performance steeped in charisma.

The vibe at Tantra offered a mellow decrescendo to the excitement of the last few weeks. Pip of the Fourth Mother made the most of the festival’s last night as drummer Ben Daniel Rynngksai spoke enthusiastically about the emerging music scene in Shillong. Independence Rock offers bands like these the chance to shine on the national stage, putting Northeast rock on the map. Long may it continue.

Lara Choksey

Shillong band Pip of the Fourth Mother lost out to Mumbai’s Aftertaste in the MTV & VH1 presents MTS Red Energy Independence Rock-XXVI final, which took place over November 26-27 at Chitrakoot Gardens in Mumbai. We caught up with the boys at Tantra on Sunday at the gig — held in association with t2 — where they played a live set broadcast by MTV.

Pip’s bass guitarist Dauni Laloo didn’t seem too disappointed, saying, “It was one of my best experiences playing live”. On winning, Michael Lee of Aftertaste said, “The competition was very tough as all the contenders gave outstanding performances.” The live show on Saturday also boasted



(Top) Krosswindz performs at Tantra on Sunday (Picture by Sanjoy Chattopadhyaya); (above) Aftertaste after winning the contest in Mumbai